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REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this Patent Application, particularly in view of the above Amendment and the following remarks. No additional fee is required for this Amendment as the number of independent claims has decreased, and the total number of claims has decreased.

Telephone Interview Summary

Applicants thank the Examiner for her time and courtesies extended during a telephone interview on 09 July 2004. The structural differences between the connecting elements and the closure elements of Claims 10 and 13 and the bolts of the Merritt Patent were discussed. The Examiner agreed with Applicants' arguments that the connection recited in Claim 13 is not disclosed or suggested in the Merritt Patent. The Examiner indicated amending Claim 10 to clarify the connection should place Claim 10 in condition for allowance. Applicants have amended Claim 10, as suggested by the Examiner.

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Amendment to the Claims

Applicants amended independent Claim 10 to clarify the claimed invention. Support for this Amendment can be found at Page 8, last paragraph, of Applicants' Substitute Specification.

Applicants canceled Claims 11 and 18. Applicants amended Claims 9, 19, and 20 to depend from other claims instead of canceled Claim 11.

Applicants added new Claim 22, which depends from Claim 13. Support for this Amendment can be found at Page 9, first paragraph, of Applicants' Substitute Specification.

No new matter has been added to the claims by this Amendment.

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Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 10, 13, and 15 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Merritt, U.S. Patent 4,455,801, in view of JP 10002040. In view of the telephone interview with Examiner Horton on 09 July 2004, Applicants understand that the rejection of Claim 13 is moot. Applicants have amended Claim 10 to clarify the claimed invention, as suggested by the Examiner, and assert that amended Claim 10 is also patentable over the Merritt Patent in view of JP10002040. Neither the Merritt Patent nor JP 10002040 disclose or suggest Applicants' recited connection including connecting elements and closure elements.

Claims 3, 4, 6, 9, 14-16, 20, and 22 depend from one of Claims 10 and 13 and are thus patentable for at least the same reasons as Claims 10 and 13, respectively. Claims 11 and 18 have been canceled.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 5, 7, 8, 12, and 21 are allowed. Applicants understand from the Examiner's comments during the telephone interview on 09 July 2004 that Claim 13

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and amended Claim 10, and thus all dependent claims, include allowable subject matter over the prior art of record.

Conclusion

Applicants intend to be fully responsive to the outstanding Office Action. If the Examiner detects any issue which the Examiner believes Applicants have not addressed in this response, Applicants' undersigned attorney requests a telephone interview with the Examiner.

Applicants sincerely believe that this Patent Application is now in condition for allowance and, thus, respectfully request early allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark D. Swanson', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

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